

# 17

# The Participation Forum<sup>\*</sup>

March 20, 1996

## ***Topic: Real-World Participation Issues: Teamwork, Time Pressures, and Personalist Politics***

*The seventeenth session of the Participation Forum looked at participation issues as experienced in the real world of USAID missions. It explored the relationship between the way USAID personnel work together within USAID and their ability to maintain consistent, honorable partnerships in the host country. Marilyn Zak, director of USAID/Dominican Republic, described how reengineered systems and approaches were put in place as the Dominican Republic mission became a country experimental lab (CEL). In spite of the tumult of politics in the country and the pressures of the USAID budgetary process, the mission was able to facilitate and support Dominican initiatives in democracy and education. Zak's candid appraisal of the CEL experience was put in context by Marcia Bernbaum, currently with PPC but formerly with the LAC Bureau. The session was introduced by Acting Deputy Administrator Jill Buckley, head of the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, who pointed out that participation is a core value even in USAID's relationship with Congress.—Diane La Voy, Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development*

## **OPENING PRESENTATION: Participation on Capitol Hill**

### ***Jill Buckley***

The constituencies that I deal with are generally outside the agency, where I think it's essential to develop a sense of teamwork and to encourage participation. Teamwork-building with the folks on Capitol Hill is a fairly challenging exercise. But members of Congress certainly are among the most important stakeholders that USAID has. Without them, USAID would not have any money to do anything. It is not politically realistic to ignore them, be angry with them, or not try to figure out a constructive way to build a team with them.

---

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to Diane La Voy, using either the USAID directory or INTERNET, as DLAVOY@USAID.GOV. Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development. The Office of Health and Nutrition's Environmental Health Project (EHP) arranges logistics, maintains the mailing list, and prepares the Forum summaries.

### **Looking for Common Interests**

It has been difficult to interact with a Congress that has been seemingly so hostile to the agency; but, if we can get Congressional representatives to participate with us in understanding and funding development, we will be much better off. That is done, in my view, by trying to get them to invest in problem solving, to invest in what we are doing. For example, I had an experience this morning at a hearing with a senator who is not a big fan of development or USAID. He comes from a big-business background and is very interested in microenterprise. We should be able to start building a teamwork relationship with him on the basis of that common interest. Maybe he could gradually be persuaded to like something else that we do.

Congressional representatives deal with issues from A to Z. There is no reason that they would know about or understand what we do. In order to get them to invest with us and become partners, our policy is to be honest about our successes and failures. A government agency that never failed strains credibility. Also, it is our policy to make sure that they have way more information than they need. If we tell them all about what we're trying to do, for example, in the Dominican Republic, if we keep providing them with information that illustrates what we do and why it is important and valuable, soon they're going to know more and have more of a reason to participate with us as a team.

For years USAID concentrated on our oversight committees on the Hill, a handful of people. USAID has got to get out and talk, particularly to new people. They have no reason to know about us or to be invested in us. They have no reason to feel like part of our team. None of these folks got elected based on foreign aid.

We have got to try to find a way to create partnerships with those stakeholders as good as the partnerships we're creating around the world with host governments and with indigenous populations. We've got to do that here at home with a group that's probably, in its own way, as difficult as any overseas.

It is not a matter of pandering, or not standing up for what we believe. It is a matter of investing the time and the listening gradually to build a team with enough of the Congress so that we can begin to turn around the budget numbers.

### **The Challenge of Working with Non-Congressional Stakeholders**

We should also try to get other stakeholders or constituency groups to work with us in a participatory and teamlike fashion. They would like to work with us and would like to have a much greater say over what we do and how we do it. They would like to persuade us to work in their area and abandon other areas. Trying to maintain some kind of balance in working with them is almost more challenging than working with the Congress.

I am increasingly cognizant of how important it is to listen. We tend, in my part of the agency, to get very defensive about what we do, because we're often in the situation of defending a program, a request for money, or our reason for not doing what XYZ PVO wants us to. The more experience I have, the more I understand how much I have to listen in order to do my work well.

### **Promoting Participation: A Take from the Dominican Republic**

#### ***Marcia Bernbaum***

I would like to set the stage for Marilyn Zak's presentation by telling a little tale about a country in the Caribbean, which has a very active and vibrant civil society. It's also a tale about an

individual who has gone through several metamorphoses over the years as she and her country have evolved. Finally, it's a tale about a USAID program that started several years ago to consciously lay the seeds for reforms that enhance democracy by working through a number of NGOs in a participatory fashion.

### **APEC and EDUCA and Jacqueline Malagon**

Back in 1978, when I was fresh out of IDI training and assigned to the Latin America Bureau, my first assignment was to arrange appointments for Jacqueline Malagon. Jacqueline was a woman twice my age, with four times my energy, who was the head of an NGO in the Dominican Republic called APEC, which was established by the private sector with USAID assistance to address needs in the area of vocational training.

My next contact with her was in the spring of 1989, when I was a deputy in the Education Division of the LAC Bureau. I was asked by the mission in the Dominican Republic to assist a local group of businessmen that was in the process of organizing itself into an NGO. Again, enter Jacqueline Malagon. She was now no longer just the head of APEC; she was about to become the head of this new organization, called EDUCA, which was a spinoff of APEC. Over the years, these businessmen realized that to be effective in addressing the needs of their country and in forming a qualified work force they had to focus on primary education as well as vocational education. The group wanted also to serve as the vehicle for influencing the government to exercise reform in education, specifically to increase the budget.

Four years later I was the director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs on my initial protocol visit to the Dominican Republic. I saw that EDUCA was off and running. The organization had its problems, but had accomplished quite a lot. In a very participatory fashion, EDUCA leadership developed a 10-year plan and was successfully lobbying the government—in fact, so successfully that they got Jacqueline Malagon named minister of education.

### **Participation “Without” and “Within”**

Through a highly participatory process, the mission also launched other activities with NGOs or helped to establish NGOs, focusing on civil society and on economic policy reform.

During the spring of 1994, Marilyn Zak arrived in the Dominican Republic as mission director. Marilyn and I spent a lot of time on the phone. Every morning at 7:30, I would get an update on the elections. I couldn't wait to get into the office to hear the latest. While the going was tough in the elections and the outcome wasn't ideal, I was struck with the way that the mission was reaching out to the NGOs that it was working with. Most of the mission's portfolio was with NGOs, especially the democracy project. NGOs were working for openness and transparency in addressing the election process. If a mission is following a highly participatory approach to a problem, the solution doesn't always come out exactly the way you want it to.

When I returned to the Dominican Republic in the spring of 1995 to assist the mission with reengineering, just before going over to my current job in CDIE, I was struck with EDUCA's progress. The organization was doing even better, except that Jacqueline Malagon was running into some serious problems and subsequently was relieved of her job as the minister of education. I was also struck with the progress of the democracy project and the emerging difficulties of economic policy reform. But I was most struck by the approach that Marilyn and her deputy, Mike Deal, were taking not only to promote Dominican participation without but to promote participation within the mission.

## **The Challenge of Participation in the Dominican Republic**

***Marilyn Zak***

The culture of the Dominican Republic is unique. Imagine a 15th century Italian court with Machiavelli learning the game of life from Joaquin Balaguer. That gives the flavor of the Machiavellian intrigue that goes on. Balaguer, at the age of 89, is blind, but he is in full control. He's a master.

According to the constitution, the President has almost dictatorial powers. He controls more than 50 percent of the budget and is very much into infrastructure and not much into social spending. Balaguer's current term ends in August 1996.

The Dominican Republic is a society in transition. Elections held in May 1994 were considered "difficult." A post-electoral crisis was solved by a political accord called the "Pact for Democracy." By the terms of the pact, Balaguer's term was cut from four to two years. However, I do not rule Balaguer out, and I am not taking vacation until after the August 16th inauguration.

### **A Culture in Transition and the Need for Reform**

Within Dominican society there is a true interest in change and moving on to a new era. However, authoritarian attitudes are incredibly strong. They show up in the youth and in polls on leadership: Dominicans want strong authoritarian rule, a powerful father figure telling them what to do. Authoritarian attitudes are also reflected in NGOs. They can carry out participatory programs, but they can be very authoritarian internally.

Dominicans have remained silent at critical times. When there was major fraud and irregularities in the 1994 elections, they stayed silent. Civil society is changing now. USAID is supporting a movement to have the civil society fight for free and fair elections this May and June. However, Dominicans have known death squads as recently as the early 1970s. A few who have been outspoken have disappeared. This atmosphere affects people's willingness to participate.

Corruption, a nonfunctional judicial system, and a culture of impunity are also aspects of Dominican society. Scandals are everywhere. And no one pays a price for bad behavior. Malefactors might go to court and they might sit in prison for a little bit; but seldom is there a judicial decision against them. Society has an incredible way of forgetting. Past crimes and misbehaviors can disappear, and you never know who's going to be resurrected. However, the judicial system is the high priority for reform throughout the society.

How do the Dominicans handle conflict? They're extremely courteous and try to find solutions when conflict arises, but there's no strong pattern of cooperation. Dominicans look to the top to solve problems. They will try to get along in a partnership and cooperate for a certain length of time, but if it doesn't work, they are like Mt. Vesuvius erupting. They will go public, get on television, pay for ads in the newspaper. Then all of a sudden, poof, it's back down to nothing. One has to be able to adjust oneself to these immoderate eruptions.

The United States plays a dominant role in the Dominican Republic. We have invaded the island four times this century, twice on the Haiti side and twice on the Dominican side. The United States also played a major role when the Marines came in 1965 and made it very clear to the Dominicans that Balaguer was our choice to become president. Now it's very hard to make a Dominican believe that the United States is neutral in an election. In 1965, the United States wanted the Dominican Republic to be the role model in the Alliance for Progress—the democratic alternative to communist Cuba. Hundreds of USAID officers and contractors were running the government

throughout various ministries. Now when USAID asks for participation in our projects, we must understand the Dominicans and the history that comes with any American request.

The current USAID program is 90 percent with NGOs and focused on civil society. We look at it as a transition strategy. We're waiting for a reform-minded government to come into power in August 1996. If this happens, it will be a transition of major importance and something the United States has to pay attention to.

### **The Democracy Project: Fostering Ownership**

Previous USAID management should be credited for their vision and sensitivity when they started reaching out to the Dominicans in the early 1990s, and saying, "Let's do something on democracy." The mission director and the deputy brought the Dominicans into a slowly evolving dialogue. They were determined that the Dominicans were going to design this project. There would be no expert design team coming down from Washington. They reached out and got Dominicans who were teaching political science and sociology in the U.S. to come down and help design the program.

The mission approach was that the Dominicans would be up front, leading, and USAID would be a half step behind. A consultative group of 21 individuals representing different constituencies was formed, with one-third of the members rotating off each year. What is truly notable is the commitment and sense of ownership of this committee.

USAID wanted a 50 percent counterpart contribution. This was very hard for the groups to match, but it showed a willingness to commit. (Eventually we had to lower the 50 percent requirement on counterpart to 25 percent. It was too onerous a requirement for organizations being asked to do things that they hadn't done before.) The Dominicans wanted a 10-year time frame, and USAID agreed.

The consultative committee spent a year and a half getting itself organized, a considerable portion of which was developing the ethics of running the democracy project. When I went to the Dominican Republic as mission director two years ago, you can imagine the grumblings I heard: "What's wrong with this project? It is not moving money."

The administrative unit for the democracy project is one of the Catholic universities. It has been an excellent vehicle through which to provide administrative support to the consultative committee, although, as a recent evaluation of the project found, there are too many rules and regulations. We are going to see how we can reengineer the administrative unit to loosen it up a bit.

What has been accomplished in four years? The consultative committee members will say that they learned about democracy. They learned compromise and how to get consensus in spite of differences in views. They had never experienced this before.

A leader of Participación Ciudadana, the local group now doing election monitoring, was an original member of the consultative committee. He has told me that one would not have had this activism, this commitment to democracy, if it had not been for the consultative committee.

In establishing its rules and regulations the consultative committee also showed that it is possible to compete fairly. A person on the committee could not get his or her own project approved simply by virtue of membership on the committee.

The committee has reached out to a wide diversity of groups, groups that USAID has not previously been involved with, especially in the barrios. Three-quarters of the activities are outside of Santa Domingo.

The project was doing well until just before the post-election crisis in 1994. And we sat in the embassy and in USAID and figured, "We've got to think what we're going to do for the presidential elections rescheduled for 1996; we can't think 10 years now." We gathered members of the consultative group together and went out to dinner. The Americans came out of that dinner depressed because the Dominicans had a long-term view for democratic development—10 years out; they didn't

want to focus on the 1996 election; they couldn't be pushed; they weren't prepared to take on the problems presented by the new elections. USAID was supposed to stay a half a step behind, so we decided not to rely on this project to do the types of things that we thought were important.

We sought other ways to do them, involving a broader action group. We worked with Participación Ciudadana to craft a broader-based coalition, because we felt that any group that was to do local electoral monitoring needed protection. We knew what would happen to any group trying to go against certain norms. It would be the first time in a long time that one might have free and clean elections. This is not the tradition in the Dominican Republic.

As USAID has moved along with the democracy group and the consultative committee, a small window has been opened and projects to help support the election are being funded. USAID let things happen; we did not say, "We want this." When the attacks came from the Cardinal against the local observers, against the United States and USAID, the Dominicans could say that they were doing this on their own, with no interference or direction by the United States. They are there fighting, and they will decide what level and what speed that they will go. We can only help them.

### **The Primary Education Project: Forging a Consensus**

The Dominican Republic has one of the lowest levels of social spending in the hemisphere. After Rafael Trujillo was assassinated in 1961, a major transformation took place in education. APEC was formed, and then years later the private sector and USAID recognized that the focus had to be on primary education if the society was to become productive, and they set up EDUCA. Jackie Malagon and Gustavo Talveras, one of the principal founders of APEC and a leader in the education movement, put forth an incredible effort to develop a 10-year plan for a more productive society through education. They had over 50,000 people—from both the public and the private sector—participating in building a broad-based consensus on their plan. When Jackie Malagon was named minister of education in 1991, she kept the role of executive director of EDUCA. That is a conflict of interest, in our terms, but not in the Dominican context. When I arrived on the scene, I found that she played both roles very effectively.

Then *RUMBO*, a magazine that does investigative reporting, did a major report on the Ministry of Education and Jackie Malagon. It was a scandal, a major corruption issue. Jackie and others were hauled in front of a court. No one went to jail, and it was never clear what really happened. Jackie ended up getting fired by Balaguer, and the issue was, what happens to EDUCA? Most people would think this would hurt EDUCA. Well, it didn't.

Last December, EDUCA had a seminar for teachers and principals as part of the educational reform. Initially, it was planned for 300-400 teachers. Two weeks or so before the seminar, the number rose to 700, then 900. The day before, it was 1,100; the day of the seminar, 1,400 teachers filled the room. Jackie Malagon was there talking to them about education and commitment.

Much to my surprise, when the administration unit for the democracy project consultative committee came in with its list of people for the consultative committee, Jackie's name was there as the *reformista* candidate. Since there are no legal charges against her, she became the government's party representative on our democracy consultative committee.

### **The Economic Growth Project: Participation without Ownership**

The problem with the Economic Growth project is that it had a consultative committee without ownership. The project was initiated in 1992 with the goal of encouraging the adoption of and adherence to sound policies to promote investments, productivity, export-led economic diversification, and sustained economic growth. The highly innovative project attempted to promote policy change by strengthening, deepening, enhancing, and making more dynamic the participation of NGOs in

economic policy design and implementation. The Stanford Research Institute won the bid for the cooperative agreement. They managed the project. Local NGOs carried out most of the activities.

An evaluation of this project came to the following conclusion: "There is widespread confusion concerning the relative priority to be given to the objectives of the project, i.e., whether the project should actually achieve policy reforms or merely stimulate broad discussions of reforms by the NGOs. The project participants have, therefore, been free to take actions based on their own set of priorities, and have caused the project to become a focus of controversy as different actors are judging actions against different criteria."

USAID asked a group of leading economists to design a project on economic reform. They designed the project and gave it to USAID, but USAID internally redesigned the project with an NGO focus. The redesigned project kept the group as a consultative committee as a one-year activity to look at the priorities for the NGO's activities. In that, the mission made a major error, because the members of the consultative committee did not agree with the project's NGO focus as redefined.

So, after a long, frustrating time, the consultative committee exploded. Letters were written that could be called undiplomatic at best. Stories appeared in the press on why the project was not good. The explosion made USAID realize that the Dominicans truly needed to have ownership of the project. While the NGOs were quite happy with their small activities, there was no broader support for the project.

Since 1991, there has been no major economic policy change in the Dominican Republic. There is no environment for policy reform. With the current government, it just won't happen.

USAID is winding down this project and looking at ways to use the remaining money to focus on poverty and policy change for a new government in August 1996.

### **Reengineering within the Mission**

When I arrived in Santo Domingo two years ago, the mission was managed in a command-and-control mode—micromanaged, very much top-down. The action plan was a once-a-year document, presented up here in USAID Washington, defended very well, brought back, and put in everyone's desk drawers to be pulled out the following year when we had to account for what happened. Now, this is not my personal style. I like participation, I like creativity, and I do much better in a situation that is not regulated with rules. When reengineering was offered to us, I thought, "This is the perfect match." I liked the idea of change, the ability to challenge how USAID operates, but what was important to me was participating in teamwork. So after our post-electoral crisis, USAID staff met in a retreat to define how we were going to function as a reengineering lab.

### **Setting Out Values**

On that retreat, we set out our values: (1) go for the whole bag of marbles, be risk-takers, (2) use your best judgment, (3) manage for results, and (4) practice good communication. When I look back now after a year and a half, the one thing that I hear most from everyone, from the staff, and which I say to people most often, is, "Use your best judgment."

When doing reengineering, we had to change ourselves internally before we could go out and talk to our customers and clients. USAID-Washington was telling us to go out right away and talk, but we said no. We all had to talk the same message, to be consistent. So, just like the consultative committee members for the democracy initiative project, we had to learn participation internally within the mission. Now, I must say, it was not so easy to do. USAID culture is fairly directed and action oriented.

We've also focused in on how to do things better. We got together with our partners and improved our horrendous subgrantee process. It was taking an average of 18 months for a grant to

make it through our process. We were able to package the strengthening of civil society project in an impressive two months.

### **S.O. Teambuilding**

We ended up having to have another retreat because my deputy Mike Deal and I saw the need for team building. It cannot be assumed that folks are going to be good team members. Teamwork involves totally different skills than individual work. As part of that retreat, we decided en masse that we were going to do away with our technical offices and just have Strategic Objective (S.O.) teams.

We had decided on four strategic objectives. I let people sign up for the teams they wanted to be on. I left the choice of teams up to the individual employees because I knew they were going to make the right decision based on their interests. Then each team, before they knew who their leader was, had to write out a code of conduct that they expected from their team leader. Then we appointed the team leader, who had to agree to that code.

Teamwork is hard. Team leaders are not supervising; they are coaching. Individual team members can't do things alone. They've got to get their team to work with them.

When it works, it's fantastic. For example, on a Monday, USAID Washington gave us our allotment of \$800,000. We had been waiting and waiting. And it had to be obligated by Friday! We laid out what we had, and the one key factor that I thought was critical was the piece for our judicial administration project for next fiscal year.

Our young intern, who has had to switch from microenterprise to judicial reform in the broader commercial side, didn't have the time given everything else he was doing. But when the team met, it became possible. Both program people and controllers are on the team. The financial analyst spoke up, and said, "I can do it." She came up with a way to package the information by Thursday.

Not everyone is comfortable with reengineering. I'm as happy as can be when there are no boundaries, but not everyone is like me. The staff is having to adjust for those who like the security of knowing what the rules and regulations are.

Teams have different characteristics. They need a Myers-Briggs test for teams. Some teams are introverted. We have had arguments back-and-forth, and some meetings haven't gone well. We've all left unhappy, and then we've got to go back and figure out what worked and what didn't work.

### **Mixed Messages from Washington**

The messages from Washington on delegation and empowerment are always mixed, to our frustration. We don't have the resources for training and we can't get them. But training is critical to reengineering. Reengineering is staff-intensive and time consuming, and management has to devote time to it. It's easy to have one person write a project paper. But if you want a program and a project to really work, it takes time.

Reengineering also demands flexibility among the staff. They have to do things that are not in their job description. In the future, to be able to change from private enterprise to judicial administration must be recognized as a good move.

In reengineering, I, as a manager in the agency, don't get my own way. I have less ability to dictate. I can't tell the staff, "You do it this way because I want it this way." I have to keep saying that as long as I know we agree on the strategic objectives and we know where we're going, I don't care so much how we go about getting there, because we are attuned to results.

In reengineering, team members are creative, resourceful, and better able to work outside with our partners with this very samemessage. And anyone who visits us knows the difference.

Unfortunately, reengineering doesn't give us one penny more or one centavo more in resources. No matter how good we are, we're still being cut. This is frustrating. The agency is going to have to make some critical decisions in the future about the limits on participation and what we can



afford to do on our OE budgets. And for the Dominican Republic, which is going through a transition period of historical proportions, I will have even less resources than I do now, when and if a reform-minded government is elected. That is truly the challenge for us all.

## **DISCUSSION SESSION**

### **Coping with the Lack of Structure**

**Charlotte Young** (Argonne National Laboratory): I'm curious about how you're working with USAID employees who need more structure. How are you coaching them along and supporting them?

**Zak:** It takes both my time and my deputy's time in sitting with them and talking it through. We have to be sensitive and watch for signals when someone is too uncomfortable, and to go back and make sure we are patting people on their backs. There's a lot to congratulate people about. When they take a bit of a risk and it pays off, we should be there saying, "Keep at it."

### **Indispensable Team Members**

**John Grant:** When S.O. teams are established, sometimes different groups feel that one person is indispensable. Three different teams may want to have access to one person. How did you deal with the problem of people who are in demand by several different groups?

**Zak:** We have to sit down and negotiate. Also, we have started once-a-month meetings of team leaders. On the management side, each team signs an S.O. pact specifying what we expect them to accomplish. This is management's way of holding the team accountable and negotiating who's going to be committing what part of their time. From that, we realized we have to get the team leaders together and start having once-a-month meetings to deal with the broader issues.

It's not so much that someone is in more demand; it's that individuals are in demand at the same time, especially in our controller's office. When crunches come and they have to meet deadlines, it's a challenge. We just try to work it through, and sometimes it's not as satisfactory as we would like.

### **Impressions of an Evaluator: Kudos and Challenges**

**La Voy:** I would like to ask Erin Soto, who has just completed an evaluation in the Dominican Republic, to comment a little bit on what felt different there.

**Erin Soto:** I was one person on a six-person evaluation team, and I spent the better part of two or three days in the mission. The first thing I noticed is that the value statement is posted everywhere—at the reception desk, on doors in the bathroom; it's a constant reminder.

I was really impressed with the more junior staff, or the staff from other parts of the mission, like the financial management office. These persons are strategic objective team members. I was impressed at the democracy S.O. team's level of understanding of the project, the history of it, who the key players are, what the concept is. They understood that thoroughly, as well as any other team member or the team leader. And they had opinions on what was working, what wasn't, how to improve it. In the last year I've been to four or five different missions, some of which are reengineering labs, and I haven't seen that level of understanding elsewhere. Ultimately USAID is getting a bigger bang for the buck, particularly from these lower-level staff. They want to contribute more and they have a lot more to contribute.

In the evaluation itself, we met with one of the financial management officers on the democracy S.O. team and the project assistant. A particular problem was raised to our attention: the frequency of financial management reports, every month. The democracy program awards a large number of small grants, most to grassroots organizations. Vouchering every month is difficult.

The administrative unit forces them to do that, tells them that's the way it is. It is a very rigid unit, as Marilyn mentioned. Also, the financial management person says that even though it's a cooperative agreement and the regs allow for vouchering less frequently, the way this particular cooperative agreement is set up, they have to voucher every month.

So the evaluation team asked them how they could improve this situation. The project assistant said, "Okay, what is the objective here?" And I chimed in, saying, "The objective is to provide the support that this group needs to run these grants and to get the money out to the civil society groups." The financial management officer says, "Okay now, what don't we need to do?" They were just going through this process in their minds: Do we really need this? What would change if we did it every three months instead of every month? And they concluded that they could get together and talk with the administrative group and try to reduce the frequency of reporting. To find that flexibility in a project assistant and a financial management officer, both FSNs, was impressive.

One comment on the challenge that still is there. In the democracy project, USAID has veto power over the grants, but in practice, it is clearing all the grants. The trick is to find a way for the FSNs and the people in the mission to provide input to make the grants stronger and better without making the recipients of the grants feel like USAID has all the power. That's one challenge. And the other challenge is that the university, as Marilyn mentioned, runs a very rigid administrative operation. Staff of the administrative unit say they are rigid because that's what USAID wants. When I mentioned reengineering, they said, "Oh, well, Marilyn will soon be gone, and sometime a new administration will come and this will all change." I tried to convince them that reengineering was part of a movement that was even bigger than USAID, but I'm not sure I succeeded. It's a challenge to convince them to trust us.

**Zak:** The university has been the recipient for USAID for a number of years, and university staff know what it's like to be audited and also to be questioned and to be attacked by the ultra-rightists. They've had to open up. They've invited the ultra-right to come in and look at their books, and they felt very proud that every penny was accounted for. We've got to figure out what we really don't need. The issue of responsibility versus control still needs some work.

## **Budget Woes**

**Jay Nussbaum:** How can the team be a mechanism for intelligently taking cuts, which I think is going to be the business of most of our teams very soon?

**Zak:** We have scrubbed the budget. We gave up one of our office buildings. We can't cut any more unless we cut bodies. In the Dominican Republic, we have recently taken on the controller's responsibilities for Guyana and for the Eastern Caribbean, as they phase out, without any increase in staff. And what's even more frightening, we have got to figure in an inflation factor—that salaries will increase a little bit—and there's no room for that. USAID Washington has got to make critical decisions on what is cut and what isn't. If USAID Washington wants participation and reengineering, it has to make the hard decisions that it can't do everything.

## Communications from the E-Mail Bag

### *Attitudinal Obstacles*

**Paola Barragan:** “I think many people around the globe would like to hear some ‘anecdotal’ experience about how attitudinal obstacles, especially in former (still current?) PROJECT managers, have been overcome in the transition from PROJECT MANAGING to TEAM MANAGEMENT. My inquiry implies knowing in what specific ways managing is being carried out in teams.”

### *An Observation on Forum 14*

**Bob Mansfield:** “I am particularly taken by ‘What We Can Change When We Listen Harder.’ From a purely selfish motive, I’m finding I learn more about my own universe and beliefs by listening to others and theirs than by expounding on mine. That’s pretty empowering and motivating in itself.”